

MINUTES

Student Representative Council Meeting

Date:	Aug. 16, 2022
Time and venue:	5 – 6:30 pm, via Student Rep WebEx Space
In attendance:	Kurin Lelean, Sixuan Guo, Divya Sharma, Ujjwal Kaushal, Nisura Yasaswin, Amanda Meehan
Apologies:	Mikayla Royal, Zulfa Soltani
Minutes secretary:	Sixuan Guo

1. Updates from Michaela Hosking, Manager of Student Engagement and Success

Michaela welcomed the new leadership and thanked the previous leadership. Divya has a wealth of knowledge and experience and a good passion for copywriting, has been involved with Student Voice Australia and has done a lot of work with our marketing team to promote the Bachelor of Nursing, stays on for the semester and is now the Communications Coordinator of the SRC. Nisura, who has been in the council for a long time, also stays on, along with Mikayla and a few others. She congratulated Amanda for being nominated for a state-wide award and hoped that would yield great results for her.

Michaela also gave an update about the transition from Semester 1 to Semester 2 and the recruitment of new members. Seven leads were generated from the SRC event which supported the recruitment of new reps during the Orientation Week. She is currently interviewing the candidates and appointed Zulfa Soltani, a new international student studying Bachelor of Accounting. She would like to make sure that our First Australians voices and the voices of those with disabilities are brought into this forum too.

Michaela planned to organize a big forum at the end of this year and invite past reps and current reps to come together and network and socialize. She also suggested running some campus student events to raise the profile of the SRC and capture more student voices.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of last meeting were not taken effectively, but all meeting agenda items are always open and can be referred to and new items be added on. Michaela will revisit those recommendations and we will formally pass them through Council in the next meeting. The action regarding student groups and activity groups has been pending for some time but so far no one has shown interest, so it would be set aside for now and be reopened if there is any interest later on.

3. Discussion Theme – Mental Health

3.1. How does Holmesglen promote mental health and wellbeing?

Holmesglen has been promoting mental health services through Student Wellbeing and Mental Health Month. But reps were not sure how effective the services are, as students have no input in this. After the 6 free counselling sessions, do the counsellors check in with the students to see how they are doing? Reps said there is a need to revise the services and connect with students who have access to those services.

Reps said it is vital to have open conversation about mental health. Reps said sometimes even when mental health is spoken about a lot or mentioned especially in nursing, it doesn't go anywhere and it feels kind of like a box tick, we do this because it is what everybody does now, but it doesn't actually mean anything. Reps said running the RUOK day is a good start, it's great to continue the conversation but after that, what do we continue doing? How do we talk to students about these?

3.2. What kind of resources should Holmesglen offer for mental health?

Reps mentioned that nursing and social work/youth works students have units in mental health, which other students may not have access to. Reps said that a course that is built around mental health is very scarce, but some integration of mental health into the courses especially in the last year may be helpful for students. Reps said regardless of the course there should be an open discussion around being mindful of your wellbeing and that of your peers.

The resources on Holmesglen website is very limited.

3.3. What mental health supports does Holmesglen provide to the students? Are students aware of these supports? Do students know that Holmesglen offers six free counselling sessions? How can we better promote these supports to students?

Holmesglen provides six free counselling sessions to students, which are not emergency services.

Currently, this service is promoted via Student Wellbeing. Reps suggested having videos by students who have used these services to talk about their experiences or having some testimonies may help promote the service to students.

3.4. Are students able to access the adequate mental health supports they need? How easy and fast can the students access these supports? Are there any supports available outside of working hours at Holmesglen? How can Holmesglen promote other support services outside of Holmesglen to students?

Reps said that students may not have adequate mental health supports they need as six sessions may not be enough. These free sessions at Holmesglen are within working hours, and not emergency services. There is no support available outside of working hours at Holmesglen.

Counselling is not covered in health insurance for international students and is in the range of \$200 – 300 per session. Even for local students, with Medicare it is around \$90 per session. Such high cost would deter a lot of students from seeking help. Any possibility that more free sessions be available to students?

We need to develop more resources and provide more information such as “a journey to get there” and “self-realization”, to help students before they make the decision to have the one-to-one session. A list of outside services and ways to navigate to the services would be helpful to students, so that they don't need to spend a lot of time surfing the internet to try to figure out which service is suitable for them.

3.5. What can Holmesglen improve upon to better meet the mental health needs of students?

Reps suggested that counsellors should have multi-culture training to understand the cultural backgrounds of the students to better support them. It would be great if counsellors could use more sensitive languages when talking to students who come to the services, and not add more burden on them.

Reps recommended Student Wellbeing connecting students to the appropriate outside service, instead of just giving them a flyer.

Reps thought that it would be great if mental health could be integrated into courses.

3.6. What can be further implemented by Holmesglen to support students mental health and wellbeing?

Reps recommended establishing partnerships with outside services and having some mental health events or summits at Holmesglen to encourage open conversation about mental health and wellbeing. This could help students from diverse cultural background to overcome the stigma of mental illness and seek help.

If we could embed counsellors in different study areas, that would help change the model of service and encourage students to open to the discussion of mental health and wellbeing.

3.7. How can Holmesglen help students recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health illness and support the students in need?

Reps suggested having some resources available in a single space on our website, some mental health events or seminars would help students recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health illness, and learn appropriate and sensitive language to support the students in need.

4. Recommendations:

4.1 Holmesglen to collate a list of external mental health and welfare services so students can access these services if Student Wellbeing wait times are too long.

4.2 Clarification of the role that Student Wellbeing plays in the referral to external services.

4.3 Recommend that campus events be an opportunity to open the discussion about mental health amongst the student community.

4.4 Opening the dialogue and building the relationship between the SRC and Student Wellbeing.

4.5 Discuss the need for counsellors to acknowledge and recognise different cultural lived experiences when support students (culturally competent).

4.6 Consider a change of language to remove the burden of support seeking from the students to access mental health support and create a more inclusive and safe space for students to access this support.

4.7 Consider courses that don't embed mental health within their curriculum and how we open the discussion of positive mental health with those students.

Next meeting is scheduled for 23 Sept., 2022, 5pm via the SRC WebEx Space.